

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

ARE WE PREPARED FOR THE BAD ACCIDENT THAT COULD HAPPEN??

Seriousness determines how thorough you have to be.

Investigation vs. reporting.

1) Documentation

- a) If it's not recorded, it doesn't exist!
- b) Write down facts; don't rely on your memory.
- c) Clear, concise and readable. You may have to use this information 3 years from now.
- d) Time / location
- e) Weather / road conditions
- f) Road defects
- g) Full names & addresses of:
 - i) Drivers
 - ii) Witnesses
 - iii) Passengers
 - iv) Injuries
- h) Statement – Investigating officer
- i) Traffic control devices
- j) Who got ticket?
- k) Safety belt/restraint use
- l) Your take on the accident – IN DETAIL!!
- m) What speed were all the vehicles moving?

2) Photography

In general:

- a) Extremely important.
- b) Photographs are critical for accident reconstructionists.
- c) Courts accept photographs – not disputed. Carry more weight than testimony.
- d) Good refresher for you.
- e) Record short-lived evidence.
- f) Not a substitute for other information.
- g) No Polaroids!!
 - i) Poor quality – no resolution
 - ii) Expensive to copy
 - iii) Impossible to blow up
 - iv) Fade quickly
 - v) Almost worthless
- h) Take photos even if there is no damage.
- i) What to photograph
 - i) Entire accident scene – 3 locations
 - ii) Entire scene
 - iii) Closer
 - iv) Very close

- v) Four sides of each vehicle at right angle
- vi) License plate
- vii) Vehicle ID number
- viii) Additional close-ups of damage area
- ix) Contact damage
- x) Induced damage
- xi) Vehicle's relationship to the road
- xii) Paint transfers, abrasion marks, etc.
- xiii) Point of possible impact
- xiv) Vehicle defects (slick tires, etc.)
- xv) Vehicles' final resting place
- xvi) Terrain (hills, curves, etc.)
- xvii) Obstructions
- xviii) Intersection, if applicable
- xix) Skid marks – 50' increments
- j) Photography tips:
 - i) Obtain police photographs when possible
 - ii) Obtain photos prior to moving vehicles
 - iii) Take each photo from a different angle
 - iv) Movement spoils pictures – hold camera steady with both hands
 - v) Avoid taking pictures into the sun
 - vi) Severity determines the number of photos
 - vii) Don't get in the way of emergency personnel
 - viii) Long-lived evidence – photograph later
 - ix) Lay ruler on skidmark for photo
 - x) Take majority of photos straight on or at a right angle
 - xi) Label photos immediately after developing
 - k) Polaroid photos only OK for show and tell
 - l) Quality of photos will tell all
 - m) Take plenty of pictures. They are cheap

3) Field Sketches & Diagrams

- a) Not to scale
- b) Do immediately (rough at scene, polish up later)
- c) Include intersections, traffic controls, road names and numbers and other pertinent information
- d) Neatness and accuracy important

4) Skid Marks

- a) Measurement and photograph important
- b) Explanation of skidmarks
- c) Utilized by reconstructionists
- d) Acceptance by courts
- e) Absence of skidmarks – ABS brakes
- f) Change of direction – point of impact
- g) Utilize lumber crayon for contrast

- h) Request police measurements
- i) Short-lived evidence will be erased by rain, sun & snow

5) Interviewing drivers, witnesses, etc.

- a) Speak to drivers, witnesses, others
- b) High priority
- c) Avoid rapid-fire questions
- d) Appear impartial, sympathetic
- e) Record all major points, pro and con
- f) Need to interview later:
- g) Injured
- h) Witnesses who left the scene
- i) Police, E.M.T., and wrecker drivers are a good source
- j) "Tell me in your own words..."
- k) Keep positive attitude – be polite
- l) Avoid yes/no questions – limit information
- m) Require our driver to detail the entire situation
- n) Ask thoughtful questions – avoid accusations

6) Dealing with emergency personnel, etc.

- a) Introduce yourself to the police A.S.A.P.
- b) Advise them of your intention to cooperate
- c) Inform them of your desire to take photos, interview, etc.
- d) Request permission to speak with police prior to leaving
- e) Do not interfere with their work
- f) E.M.T. / Hospital may inform you of extent of injuries
- g) Wrecker drivers and repair shop are a good source of information

7) Effects on your driver

- a) Supervisor demeanor regarding collision is important
- b) Drivers must be held accountable – either disciplinary action or praise
- c) Safety must be a team effort; proactive vs. reactive
- d) Accidents are extremely costly

8) When to Drug and Alcohol Test

- a) If a vehicle was not drive-able. If either vehicle had to be removed from the scene.
- b) If any person had to be taken to the hospital due to the collision.
- c) If anyone was killed due to accident
- d) If there is reasonable suspicion from a supervisor
 - i) Physical signs and symptoms consistent with prohibited substance use or alcohol misuse.
 - ii) Evidence of the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of drugs or alcohol.
 - iii) Serious or potentially serious accident that may have been caused by prohibited substance abuse or alcohol misuse.

- iv) Fights (to mean physical contact), assaults, and flagrant disregard or violations of established safety, security, or other operating procedures.
- e) Drug tests have to be completed within 32 hours, alcohol, 2 hours.
- f) Any employee that leaves a scene of an accident without a valid reason prior to submission to a test will be subject to immediate termination.
- g) Following a post accident test, employees will be placed in non-safety sensitive jobs or may chose annual leave.